

How deep did Canada dare?

Assessing national progress towards marine protection to December 2012

Photo: A.S. Wright

Introduction

As 2013 begins, CPAWS is releasing its final report on the federal government's progress in meeting the challenge we issued 18 months ago to work with provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples to establish or significantly advance protection of 12 new marine protected areas (MPAs) by the end of 2012. We issued the challenge because Canada was lagging far behind in our international commitment to complete a network of marine protected areas by 2012, and the 12 new protected areas would represent a sign of tangible progress in addressing this deficit.

With the longest coastline of any country in the world, but less than one percent of our oceans under any form of meaningful protection, Canada's rich marine ecosystems are at growing peril. The biggest threats to marine biodiversity are overfishing, industrial development, pollution and climate change. Marine protected areas offer one of the most important means of addressing these threats, by providing sanctuaries within the world's oceans for aquatic species. However, Canada's slow progress in establishing marine protected areas means the risks continue to grow to the marine ecosystems for which we, as a country, are directly responsible.

The 12 sites CPAWS identified as strong candidates for protection by December 2012 are extraordinary places that nurture fish stocks and shelter species like right and blue whales, tufted puffins and leatherback turtles. They

are also amazing destinations for nature lovers to marvel at the wonders above and below the ocean's surface. We chose these sites because significant work had already been conducted by governments and others to identify their important ecological values. With dedicated effort, it seemed reasonable that all could move much closer to permanent protection by December of last year.

In this retrospective report, we review the action by governments and Indigenous peoples to move these 12 sites closer to final protection over the past 18 months, assessing how much progress has been made towards establishing them as marine protected areas, as well as the strength of conservation measures being proposed for each site. As a national conservation organization with chapters in nearly every province and territory, CPAWS staff and volunteers have been engaged in marine conservation efforts in all of the 12 areas reviewed in this report.

We also offer recommendations for a path forward for protecting our oceans. Completing Canada's network of marine protected areas within this decade is necessary for the future well-being of our oceans, economy and communities. The good news is that this is entirely achievable. However, in order to be successful it will take a stronger commitment from all levels of government, as well as industry and local communities, than we have witnessed in the past 18 months.



Strait of Georgia seascape | Sabine Jessen

The Results

By December 2012, of the 12 sites we identified, we are pleased to note significant progress towards protection on four, and some progress on four others. Unfortunately, in the case of the remaining four sites (the Bay of Fundy, Tawach, the South Coast Fjords of Newfoundland and the Big Eddy off Vancouver Island), no progress was made in spite of their longstanding identification as critical ocean ecosystems that are experiencing growing stress.

Overall we are disappointed that not one of the 12 identified sites has received final legal protection as a marine protected area, and that the proposed conservation measures for all of them need strengthening to guarantee their long-term health.

We are also concerned that over the past six months, federal budget cuts to the three federal agencies responsible for creating and managing marine protected areas -- Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada and Parks Canada -- have further reduced federal capacity to create new marine protected areas. It is also worrying that the amount of funding in place for science and management capacity necessary to ensure that these marine protected areas will provide long-term protection for marine biodiversity is inadequate. These are short-sighted spending reductions in our view. Protecting biodiversity through the creation of marine protected areas will not only help secure a future for Canada's oceans, it will also contribute in a significant way to the long-term sustainability of our fisheries and the economic benefits they provide for Canadians.

A number of recent studies around the world have documented the economic benefits of establishing MPA networks. In a November 2012 Scottish study, the benefits were estimated to be in the range of \$10-16 billion over 20 years.¹ In South Australia, where the state government recently designated 6% of its waters in fully protected sanctuary zones, the ecosystem service values were conservatively estimated as being worth \$21 million per year.²

We are also concerned that while planning continues for these 12 sites, interim protection measures have not been put in place to ensure that their ecological values are not further compromised by the myriad activities that are occurring in Canada's oceans -- including industrial fishing, oil, gas and mineral activities and shipping.



Southcoast Fjords region of NL | Sabine Jessen

The Path Forward

CPAWS continues to recommend that the federal government move quickly to complete the protection of the 12 important marine sites we identified in 2011. However, creating marine protected areas one at a time is a slow and inefficient way of building a system. Canada also needs to scale up our efforts by transitioning to a more systematic "network approach" of protecting life within our oceans.

By a network, we mean "a set of complementary and ecologically linked MPAs"³ that operate "cooperatively and synergistically, at various spatial scales... to meet objectives that a single reserve cannot achieve."⁴ Well-planned MPA networks are essential to protect the full variety of habitats and species found in our oceans, and to improve the overall resilience of ocean ecosystems in the face of very real threats such as climate change and natural disasters. Networks can include a variety of MPA sizes, so that socioeconomic impacts caused by restrictions to human activities such as fishing and commercial shipping can be reduced without compromising conservation benefits.⁵

¹<http://www.savescottishseas.org/news/scottish-mpa-network-could-be-worth-10-billion/>

²<http://cpd.org.au/2012/10/zoning-south-australian-marine-parks/r>

³<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/publications/fedmpa-zpmfed/page05-eng.asp>

⁴https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/mpanetworksmakingithappen_en.pdf

⁵In 2011, CPAWS published science based guidelines for developing MPA networks: cpaws.org/uploads/mpa_guidelines.pdf

Other countries are using this approach with impressive results. In November 2012, Australia announced the completion of a comprehensive marine protected area network that now covers 36% of their ocean estate. Within 18 months, the Australian government released proposed MPA networks for each of the marine bioregions around Australia, conducted public consultations and completed legal designation of a national MPA network.⁶ This experience offers clear evidence that adopting a “network approach” is possible and achievable within a relatively short time frame, compared to the 20 years it has taken Canada to inch towards a much lower degree of marine protection -- less than 1%.

Canada is already partly down this path. In 2011, Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments completed “A National Framework for Canada's Network of Marine Protected Areas” that provides guidance for such a systematic approach for planning regional marine protected area networks. With adequate resources, implementing this approach will not only speed up progress and improve the effectiveness of Canada's marine protected areas; it will provide more certainty for industry, communities and other partners and stakeholders. On the Pacific coast, the Canada and BC governments have already developed a draft MPA strategy. We are now looking to these governments to finalize and formally adopt this strategy, and begin its implementation.

In 2010, the international community, including Canada, endorsed a new 10-year framework for action to save biodiversity and enhance its benefits to people under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. This comprehensive plan includes a commitment to protect at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 -- an important interim step towards completing an adequate MPA network.

It is critical that the federal government provide long term funding for the creation and management of a national network of marine protected areas in order to safeguard the precious ocean ecosystems upon which people and other species the world over rely for life. CPAWS supports the recent recommendation of the Green Budget Coalition that the 2013 federal budget include an investment of \$35 million per year towards implementation of a network of MPAs in Canada.⁷



Male sea otter | Jarod Towers

We recommend that the federal government work with other governments to:

1. Complete protection of the 12 special marine areas we identified in 2011;
2. Proceed to implementation of the “National Framework for Canada's Network of Marine Protected Areas”, working with provinces, territories, indigenous peoples and local communities;
3. Set targets and timelines for completing the national network of MPAs, including an interim target that will meet Canada's international commitment to protect at least 10% of our coastal and marine areas by 2020;
4. Allocate \$35 million per year on an ongoing basis to support science, planning and management capacity to complete existing MPA candidate sites and implement the MPA network policy in each of Canada's oceans;
5. Quantify the socioeconomic benefits of MPAs to Canada and its coastal communities, using recent work from Scotland and Australia as a guide.

⁶<http://www.environment.gov.au/marinereserves/overview.html>

⁷Green Budget Coalition. 2012. Recommendations for Budget 2013. Ottawa: Green Budget Coalition.

Our review of marine protected area progress to December 2012

Our assessment of progress by December 2012 on creating the 12 new marine protected areas was based on the following questions:

- Did governments assess the ecological and cultural values of the area to determine its suitability for protection?
- Did governments formally identify the site as a candidate marine protected area?
- Did active negotiations get underway to establish the marine protected area between all relevant levels of government, including Indigenous peoples?
- Were public and stakeholder consultations initiated or completed?
- Does the site have final legal protection?

We judged the strength of proposed conservation measures according to leading scientific advice about essential elements that are required to nurture healthy living environments for marine species, including:

- Ecosystem-focused conservation objectives;
- Prohibition of industrial development activities;
- Adequate “no-take areas”;
- Boundaries determined by conservation science and Aboriginal traditional knowledge.⁸

Rating Scale:

Progress to establishment		Strength of Conservation Measures	
Completed	The site has full legal protection	Strong	Likely to achieve conservation goals
Significant	Important steps in the establishment process were achieved	Mixed	Some positive measures, but not enough
Some / Limited	Small steps in the establishment process were achieved	Weak	Needs major improvement
None	No steps taken toward the establishment of the site	Uncertain	To be determined, too early in process

⁸In 2011, CPAWS convened a team of 14 Canadian marine scientists to develop “Science-based Guidelines for Marine Protected Areas and MPA Networks in Canada”. The resulting guidelines outline what is required for marine protected areas to effectively contribute to conserving marine biodiversity. A few highlights are that MPA’s should prohibit industrial activities such as oil and gas, mining and aquaculture; at least 30% of each bioregion should be set aside as “no take zones” (free from commercial harvesting); and they should be planned as part of a comprehensive network of sites. Jessen, S. et al (2011) *Science-based Guidelines for Marine Protected Areas and MPA networks in Canada*. Vancouver: Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. 58 pp (available at cpaws.org/uploads/mpa_guidelines.pdf)

Where are the 12 sites?



Site by site assessment of progress towards permanent protection as of May 2012

Marine Site	Progress towards Establishment	Strength of Conservation Measures
St. Anns Bank, NS	Significant	Mixed
Hecate Strait Glass Sponge Reefs, BC	Significant	Mixed
Southern Strait of Georgia, BC	Significant	Uncertain
Scott Islands, BC	Significant	Weak
Laurentian Channel, NL	Some	Uncertain
Îles de la Madeleine, QC	Some	Uncertain
Gaspésie (American Bank), QC	Some	Uncertain
Lancaster Sound, NU	Some	Uncertain
Tawich, James Bay, NU & QC	None	Uncertain
Big Eddy, BC	None	Uncertain
South Coast Fjords, NL	None	Uncertain
Bay of Fundy, NS & NB	None	Uncertain

PACIFIC

HECATE STRAIT GLASS SPONGE REEFS British Columbia

Goal: Full legal, long-term protection as an Oceans Act Marine Protected Area and designation by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for the Glass Sponge Reefs in Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound.

December 2012 Goal: Final MPA designation

Status: Fisheries and Oceans Canada released its intended management regime for the proposed Glass Sponge Reefs MPA through what is known as a “regulatory intent” document in March 2012. We anticipate the completion of the MPA by December 2013.

Size of potential protected area: The proposed MPA encompasses four separate reef areas in BC’s coastal waters, covering a total area of approximately 2410 km², of which about 1503 km² (62%) would be fully protected from industrial activities, including bottom trawling.

Concerns

Recent scientific research indicates that sedimentation caused by bottom trawling activities adjacent to the reefs could seriously harm their chances of survival. Last year CPAWS raised concerns about the issue of indirect impacts of bottom contact activities – which stir up sediment – on the reefs. Due largely to CPAWS concerns, DFO held a meeting of its science advisory committee in October 2012 to more closely examine the effects of re-suspended sediments on the sponges. DFO is currently preparing the science advisory report, which we hope will provide management recommendations to reduce the impact of sedimentation from bottom contact fishing near the reefs.

Until DFO finishes a management plan for the future MPA, the current fishing closures will protect the reefs from physical damage from bottom trawling activity, but not from indirect impacts that could smother them, such as sedimentation drifting from bottom trawling in nearby areas.

Rating

Progress: Significant

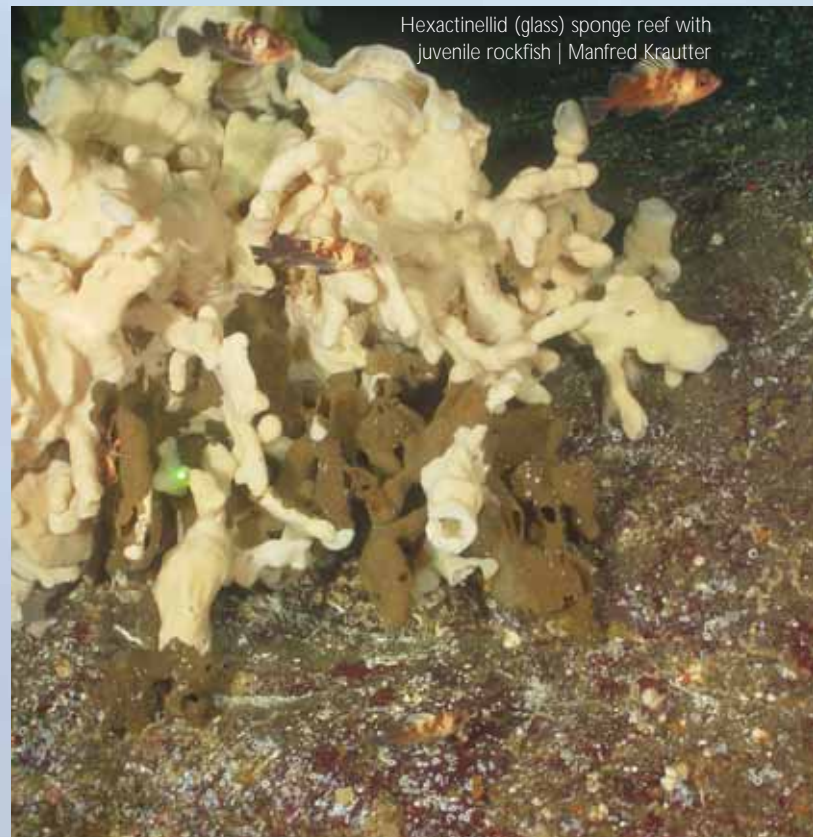
Conservation

Measures: Mixed

If the moratorium on oil and gas exploration and development off the BC coast is lifted, offshore oil and gas activities surrounding the reefs could threaten their future health, as would increased shipping of oil, which could lead to spills that would threaten the reefs’ long-term survival.

What’s at stake?

These unique marine animals were first discovered off the coast of BC in Hecate Strait in the 1980s and are the only known living glass sponge reefs of this size anywhere in the world. The Hecate Strait glass sponge reefs are estimated to be 9,000 years old. They reach 25 metres in height (the size of an 8-storey building) and provide vital seafloor habitat for a wide range of marine animals including octopi, shrimp, squat lobsters, sea cucumbers and fish such as rockfish, lingcod, sole, and skate.



Hexactinellid (glass) sponge reef with juvenile rockfish | Manfred Krautter

HECATE STRAIT GLASS SPONGE REEFS

British Columbia

continued...

The sponges are extremely slow growing and due to their brittle silica (glass) structure, the reefs are particularly vulnerable to damage and disturbance. Scientists estimate that over half of the Hecate Strait reefs were destroyed by trawlers before fishing closures were put in place by DFO in 2002.

History

The glass sponge reefs were first discovered in 1987 during a routine mapping of the seafloor. They cover a discontinuous area of 1,000 km² and are found at depths between 140m and 240m. Damage to the reefs caused by trawl gear was detected in 1999.

CPAWS-BC began advocating for protection of these internationally unique reefs in 2002 and fishing closures to bottom trawling were implemented by DFO that same year. In June 2010, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced the Hecate Strait glass sponge reefs as an Area of Interest for an Oceans Act Marine Protected Area.

Since the announcement of the Area of Interest, DFO has held stakeholder consultations, and in March 2012 released draft regulations for the MPA. Boundaries have been proposed that delineate the protected area into 3 zones - the Core Protection Zone, the Adaptive Management Zone and the vertical Adaptive Management Zone.

More recently DFO has convened stakeholders, including the fishing industry and the conservation sector to develop management arrangements that will implement the regulations being developed for the MPA. Unfortunately, the timeline for final designation of the MPA has now been delayed until the end of 2013.

What's next?

Finalize the regulations for the proposed MPA, and develop a management plan that specifies how activities, including fishing, will be managed to ensure the reefs receive long-term protection.



SCOTT ISLANDS

British Columbia

Goal: Strict protection of the Scott Island seabird foraging areas through the designation of a marine National Wildlife Area (mNWA).

December 2012 Goal: Final mNWA designation

Status: Progress has been made in the past year towards designating a marine National Wildlife Area for the Scott Islands marine region. Stakeholder consultation meetings were completed by February 2012 and in October 2012 the initial boundary was refined to account for new information about important bird foraging areas. However, final designation has now been delayed until the end of 2013.

Size of potential protected area: 11,546 km².

Concerns

The federal government's proposed conservation measures for the mNWA would not place any limits on existing industrial activities such as commercial fishing or shipping.

According to the draft regulatory intent document, Environment Canada will develop a process to evaluate the impacts of fishing practices around the Scott Islands on habitat important for seabird foraging. Practices that are found to pose an unacceptable risk of impact to this habitat will be identified for mitigation through the appropriate Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. This work is not expected to be completed until 2017. In the meantime, current fishing practices would continue, regardless of the harm they may be causing to the bird life.

At a minimum, the management measures should immediately identify zones to be protected from commercial and recreational fisheries, and shipping lanes that avoid seabird concentrations. Allowing industrial-scale activities to continue unchanged within the

Rating

Progress: Significant

Conservation Measures: Weak

mNWA will pose too great a risk to the future health of this critical ecosystem. Unless significant conservation measures are put in place to protect biodiversity in this mNWA, the Scott Islands will become a protected area on paper only, and not in practice.

What's at stake?

The Scott Islands marine area, identified as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International, supports the highest concentration of breeding seabirds in the Canadian Pacific. The rich ocean waters surrounding these islands are vital foraging grounds for millions of seabirds that breed and nest on the Islands every year.

About 40 % of the seabirds that breed in BC nest on the Scott Islands - this includes about half of the world's Cassin's auklets, 90% of Canada's tufted puffins, 95% of Pacific Canada's common murrelets and 7% of the global rhinoceros auklet population. The region is also of immense importance to fork-tailed storm-petrels and black-footed albatrosses. Seabird populations were estimated at approximately 2 million in the late 1990s; however



Tufted puffin | Alan Wilson

significant declines in Cassin's auklet and common murre populations since that time bring the current total seabird population closer to 1.4 million.

History

In 1971, British Columbia established three provincial Ecological Reserves on the islands. Additional islands and small areas of surrounding marine waters were protected as provincial parks in 1995.

On October 9, 2007, the Government of Canada announced funding to '*protect important foraging areas for seabird populations on the Scott Islands*.' In 2010, Environment Canada established a government steering committee and a stakeholder advisory group for the planning and establishment process of a marine National Wildlife Area for the Scott Islands.

In June 2011, Environment Canada proposed an mNWA boundary which was subsequently adjusted to address CPAWS' and others' concerns that a significant portion of the Cassin's auklet's marine foraging area had been left out. As of October 2012 the boundary captures more of the Cassin auklet's foraging area, although some areas still remain outside the boundary.

What's next?

Environment Canada is planning to post its Draft Regulatory Strategy for the proposed mNWA in early 2013 for a 60-day public comment period. Final legal designation has been delayed until the end of 2013.



Cassin's auklet chick | Sabine Jessen

SOUTHERN STRAIT OF GEORGIA

British Columbia

Goal: National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) in the Southern Strait of Georgia extending from the southern end of Gabriola Island, to Haro Strait near Victoria, and including Saanich Inlet and Cordova Bay. The NMCA would include core no-take areas in this ecologically rich and heavily used marine environment.

December 2012 Goal: NMCA established

Status: In October 2011, after many years of discussion, the federal and provincial governments agreed on a proposed boundary, and the province agreed to transfer seabed ownership to the federal government to enable creation of an NMCA in the Southern Strait of Georgia. Currently, the federal and provincial governments are wrapping up consultations with local governments, First Nations, and affected tenure holders. These consultations together with a socio-economic report will complete the NMCA feasibility study, and lead to a formal announcement by the federal and provincial governments regarding their intention to proceed with the next stage of NMCA establishment.

Size of potential protected area:
Study area is 1,400 km²

Concerns

Although Parks Canada and the BC government have been working on the feasibility study for over 10 years, it is still not completed. In the meantime, the Southern Strait of Georgia is open to intensive shipping and heavy recreational fishing use. While the Canadian and BC governments have agreed to proceed with an NMCA, no specific protection measures have yet been outlined. We are also concerned that a vaguely defined “phased approach” to establishment may be used, which would leave much of the area unprotected for years to come.

What's at stake?

Known by Coast Salish peoples as “SQELATES” (meaning “home”), this body of water between the southern BC mainland and Vancouver Island has long been revered for its role in nurturing both human and natural ecosystems. It

Rating

Progress: Significant

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

includes critical habitat of the federally endangered southern resident killer whale and many fish species, including rockfish, lingcod and herring.

Approximately two million shorebirds and seabirds use the region's estuaries, tidal flats and coastal waters as summering, staging and wintering grounds. Harbour seals are year-round residents. Steller and California sea lions are present during the winter months. Many “world giants” make their home here, such as the world's largest octopus, sea urchin, nudibranch, anemone, intertidal clam, sea star, scallop and barnacle.

However, there are many human threats to the health of this ecosystem, including increased urbanization, shipping, cruise ship travel, recreational boating and whale watching, noise pollution and habitat alteration. New proposals for dramatic increases in oil tanker traffic through the area are raising serious concerns among local residents.



Tiger rockfish | Marilyn Kazmer

SOUTHERN STRAIT OF GEORGIA

British Columbia

continued...

History

A 1971 federal government report first noted:

The Gulf Islands and Saanich Inlet area should become a National Marine Park. The area is in the process of rapid development, so prompt action is required if its natural charm is to be preserved.⁹

In 2003, the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve was created, protecting small areas of the southern Gulf Islands archipelago, but not the larger marine environment.

For 25 years there was little progress made on this marine proposal, so in 1997 CPAWS spearheaded the development of the Southern Strait of Georgia Marine Conservation Network - a coalition of non-governmental organizations, scientists and stakeholders – with the goal of protecting the marine environment of the Southern Strait of Georgia through the establishment of an NMCA. Since then, the NMCA coalition has worked collaboratively to raise public awareness of and support for NMCA establishment, and to promote a large area that extends to Gabriola Island in the north.

Parks Canada and the BC government launched a feasibility study for an NMCA in the southern Strait of Georgia in 2003, and while the study has still not been finalized, Canada and BC have agreed to move forward towards an NMCA. Following the announcement of the proposed

boundary for the future NMCA in 2011, Parks Canada has been conducting consultations with First Nations, local governments and large tenure holders that will lead to a final decision on the boundary.

In October 2012, CPAWS-BC and the Southern Strait of Georgia Conservation Network launched a website - www.takeactionsouthernstrait.ca - to facilitate public engagement in the creation of the NMCA. Over 500 letters of support for the NMCA have been received by the federal and provincial governments.

What's next?

First Nations and local government consultations must be completed and the feasibility study phase concluded with a formal federal-provincial agreement, including the final boundary. An interim management plan must be developed and the site must then be formally designated under the NMCA legislation.



⁹National Marine Parks Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca: A report to the Interdepartmental task Force on National Marine Parks. 1971. P.11

BIG EDDY

British Columbia

Goal: An international marine peace park encompassing the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary in Washington State and a new Big Eddy NMCA in Canada that will protect one of the most important marine areas of conservation value on the west coast of North America.

December 2012 Goal: Completion of a study to determine potential representative areas, and announcement of the launch of a feasibility study.

Status: No significant progress in the past year.

Size of potential protected area: CPAWS has proposed an area for a new NMCA that captures the Juan de Fuca Eddy and connects with the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary in Washington State. Size has yet to be determined.

Concerns

The Big Eddy region's marine ecosystems are in crisis. In recent years the signs have become unmistakable: declines in rockfish, salmon stocks and orca populations; harmful algal blooms; and destruction from bottom trawling of many important benthic habitats, including coral forests on the west coast.

However, the formal process of establishing an NMCA in the area has yet to begin. In January 2012, Parks Canada issued a request for proposals (RFP) for a study to identify potential representative marine areas for the Vancouver Island Shelf marine region, but then removed the RFP and didn't proceed with the project. This is the only marine regions in Canada for which Parks Canada has not completed such a study.

What's at stake?

Located within the coastal upwelling zone, the Juan de Fuca Eddy circulates nutrient rich waters to a vast amount of ecosystems on the west coast of Vancouver Island in BC. Teeming with life, the Big Eddy region supports the health and immense diversity of marine life on the west coast of Canada including large populations of orcas, sea otters, seabirds, rockfish and salmon, as well as diverse coldwater coral communities. It encompasses the northern boundary of many southern species and the southern boundary of northern species and is a stop off or end point on many migratory paths for marine mammals like humpback whales.

Rating

Progress: None

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

History

Parks Canada has a long standing commitment to establish an NMCA on the Vancouver Island Shelf as part of its mandate to establish at least one NMCA in each of Canada's 29 distinct marine regions. CPAWS-BC has been raising awareness about the importance of the Big Eddy region on the west coast of Vancouver Island since 2003, including collaborating with local First Nations and the Olympic Coast national marine sanctuary in the US.

What's next?

In the absence of government action, CPAWS is undertaking a research project with the goal of completing an equivalent representative area study in 2013, for discussion with local First Nations and communities.

Humpback whale | Duane Fuerter



ARCTIC

LANCASTER SOUND (Tallurutiup Tariunga) Nunavut

Goal: National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) to protect a marine area that has been described as the "Serengeti of the Arctic" due to its high species concentrations.

December 2012 Goal: NMCA established

Status: In December 2009, Parks Canada, Nunavut and Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) signed a memorandum of understanding to examine the desirability and feasibility of an NMCA in Lancaster Sound. In December 2010, the federal government announced their proposed boundary for this NMCA, renewed their commitment to work towards establishing an NMCA, and confirmed that oil and gas exploration would not occur within the proposed NMCA area. Since then, Parks Canada has conducted two studies on the area's ecological values, and the Geological Survey of Canada is updating a mineral energy and resource potential assessment. These studies are expected to be released in early 2013 and are required steps towards completing an NMCA. Parks Canada, the Government of Nunavut, and the QIA are continuing consultations with local communities on the NMCA in early 2013.

Size of potential protected area: Federal boundary proposal is 44,000 km²

Concerns

The QIA released a report¹⁰ in March 2012 that highlights the history of conservation proposals in the region, and the importance of full Inuit involvement in the project - from creation to management. There has been tremendous local support in Nunavut for this project and it has received some high profile attention, but more work is needed at the community level. The QIA report highlights the importance of including traditional Inuit knowledge in the design and management of the marine conservation area. Inuit have relied on Lancaster Sound's abundant wildlife and other natural resources for food, clothing and shelter for millennia.

Rating

Progress: Some

Conservation Measures: Uncertain

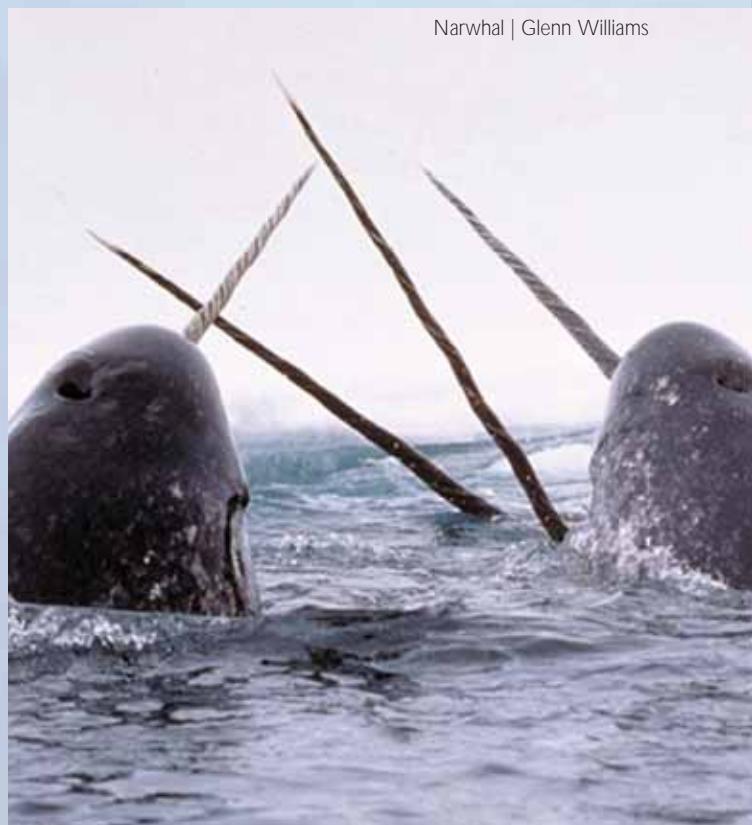
The Arctic Ocean is changing rapidly as sea ice melts in response to climate change. With more access to open water, Canada's Arctic is facing growing industrial development pressures. Lancaster Sound is located at the eastern end of the Northwest Passage, where shipping and oil and gas development pressures are intensifying. It is more important than ever to proactively establish a network of marine protected areas in advance of industrial development to help safeguard the Arctic's unique biodiversity and cultures for future generations.

What's at stake?

Lancaster Sound is an ecologically rich environment of great cultural importance to Inuit as a homeland that has sustained them for millennia.

The biological diversity and concentrations of wildlife have been described as "unequalled in the Canadian Arctic".

Narwhal | Glenn Williams



¹⁰Report can be found at: <http://www.qia.ca/apps/authoring/dspPage.aspx?page=lancaster>

LANCASTER SOUND

(Tallurutiup Tariunga)

Nunavut

continued...

Lancaster Sound is the summer home for most of the world's narwhal population, one third of North America's belugas and most of the endangered eastern population of bowhead whales. One of the highest densities of polar bears in Canada, along with huge populations of seals and walrus inhabit the region. As many as one third of all eastern Canadian colonial seabirds breed in Lancaster Sound. Northern fulmar, dovekie, black-legged kittiwake, thick-billed murre, black guillemot, glaucous, Ross and ivory gulls, phalarope, Brant and snow geese all thrive here. Enormous schools of arctic cod provide an abundant food supply for many species.

The richness of the Lancaster Sound ecosystem is a result of strong ocean currents and upwellings, as well as extensive year round ice-free areas (polynyas, which are areas of open water surrounded by sea ice, and shore leads), which support biodiversity hotspots.

Residents of the three Nunavut communities of Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, and Resolute Bay hunt and fish in these waters, depending on this traditional way of life for their economic and cultural well-being.

History

Lancaster Sound has long been identified as an important area to protect. The biological significance of Lancaster Sound was documented in the early 1980s in a "Green Paper" sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada after Inuit raised concerns about proposed offshore oil and gas drilling. Following that process, Parks Canada proposed in 1987 that Lancaster Sound be protected and began a feasibility study. That project was put on hold at the request of Inuit until the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was finalized.

The 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement set up a process for Inuit to fully participate in the proposed NMCA through the negotiation of an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement. The QIA signed a memorandum of understanding in December 2009 with the Government of Nunavut and Parks Canada to begin working on the NMCA. In December 2010, the federal Ministers of Environment, Natural Resources, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and Health announced a federal boundary proposal. This proposal is one of the most extensive conservation area proposals ever presented for Lancaster Sound. Consultations with local communities are to be conducted by Parks Canada, the Government of Nunavut, and QIA in the coming months. A feasibility study is expected to be completed by end of 2013, and will recommend boundaries and address other issues. A model will be developed for Inuit participation in the NMCA's operation and management as required in the land claims agreement, through negotiation of an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement.

What's next?

Parks Canada, QIA and the Government of Nunavut are expected to complete the feasibility study by the end of 2013. After this is complete, the parties will need to develop an interim management plan, including identifying fully protected core zones as required under the NMCA legislation, and negotiate an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement.

TAWICH

James Bay, Quebec/Nunavut

Goal: A National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) that is co-managed by Parks Canada and the Crees of Eeyou Istchee to protect an ecologically and culturally important marine region in James Bay.

December 2012 Goal: Candidate NMCA announced

Status: Progress was made over the past year that sets the stage for formally advancing an NMCA. The Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement was signed in 2010 between the Crees of Eeyou Istchee in Northern Quebec and the Government of Canada. The Agreement covers an area of about 61,000 km² off the Quebec shore and southeastern Hudson Bay. It sets out rights with regard to use and ownership of the offshore islands and natural resources, and includes provisions for marine protected areas, including an NMCA. The legislation to implement the Agreement was signed into federal law on November 29, 2011, and came into force on February 15, 2012. This is a significant step forward in addressing the complex jurisdictional issues in the region. The stage is now set for Parks Canada and the Crees to work together to develop a feasibility study for an NMCA in the area.

Size of potential protected area: The current Tawich NMCA proposal is about 20,000 km².

Concerns

The signing of the offshore land claim agreement in 2011 will help set the stage for Parks Canada and the Grand Council of the Crees to formally begin the process of creating an NMCA. However, recent budget cuts to Parks Canada could impact the agency's capacity to proceed with the project over the next few years. In the face of growing industrial development pressures in the north, continuing to advance this project now that the land claim agreement is signed is extremely important. In this context of uncertainty, the Cree communities and the Cree Regional Authority are exploring other opportunities that could complement the proposed NMCA. This includes interest in exploring options available under the recent IUCN-recognized category of Indigenous Community Conservations Areas (ICCAs).

What's at stake?

The proposed area is distinguished by a remarkable biodiversity, associated with the transition from subarctic to arctic ecosystems. This includes the most southern population of polar bears in the world, a distinct sub-

Rating

Progress: None

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

population of beluga whales, as well as ringed and bearded seals, and numerous species of waterfowl, shorebirds and fish. Caribou and wolves frequent the islands in winter. The area includes important migratory bird terrestrial habitat sites and an International Biological Program site, is recognised as an Important Bird Area in Canada, and is a host site for threatened and endangered floral species. The Crees of Eeyou Istchee have used and managed this area for thousands of years; as such it has a rich cultural heritage associated with ongoing activities, attachments and responsibilities.

History

Discussions about a marine protected area in this region date back to 2005. A preliminary proposal for an NMCA called Tawich was submitted to Parks Canada in January 2009 by the coastal Cree community of Wemindji, which is spearheading the project, in collaboration with a team of researchers from McGill and Concordia Universities. This collaboration enabled significant research to be conducted on the biological and socio-economic character of the proposed protected area¹¹. The community of Wemindji, as well as the Grand Council of the Crees and the neighbouring community of Eastmain, strongly support the proposed Tawich NMCA as a way of balancing



Polar bear | US Fish and Wildlife Service

TAWICH

James Bay, Quebec/Nunavut

continued...

development in the community with the protection of their environment. In November 2012, the Cree Regional Authority held a meeting to enable the community of Wemindjito present the proposed marine protected area to the communities of Chisasibi Waskaganish, and Whapmagoostui. All have expressed interest in seeing this project move forward. This meeting is part of an initiative by the Cree Regional Authority, which aims to protect the cultural and natural marine values of all 10 Cree communities.

CPAWS Québec has been supporting efforts to create the Tawich NMCA since the beginning, including through education and outreach to the public and decision-makers, to build broader awareness and support for the proposal.

What's next?

Parks Canada and the Crees of Eeyou Istchee, with approval from the government of Nunavut which has administrative responsibilities in the region, need to develop a formal agreement to proceed with a feasibility study for an NMCA.

¹¹The report can be found at
http://www.wemindjiprotectedarea.org/reports_2009/Tawich_NMCA_proposal_20Jan2009_FINAL.pdf

ATLANTIC

GASPÉSIE (American Bank) Gulf of St. Lawrence, Québec

Rating

Progress: Some

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

Goal: Establish an Oceans Act Marine Protected Area (MPA) off the Gaspé Peninsula that conserves the area's marine productivity and diversity of species, including those of commercial value, and supports the recovery of species at risk (including marine mammals and Atlantic wolffish).

December 2012 Goal: MPA close to completion

Status: Notable progress has been made over the past year. The federal government announced an area near the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula (known by DFO as American Bank) as a formal Area of Interest for an Oceans Act MPA on Oceans Day (8 June 2011). In March 2012 Fisheries and Oceans Canada organized a first meeting with local interests and users, including CPAWS.

Size of potential protected area: Area of interest is 1,050 km²

Concerns

This project has been led by DFO, but given the shared jurisdiction between Québec and Canada, it will be important for both governments to work collaboratively to ensure a successful outcome for this and other MPAs in the region. CPAWS Québec believes that the joint Canada-Québec Plan St. Laurent provides a good framework within which this proposed MPA could be advanced in the transparent and collaborative way that is necessary to achieve success.

Conservation in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including this proposed MPA, is proceeding in the

context of more and more intense natural resource development pressures, including for oil and gas. The presence of oil and gas exploration rights along the edge of the area of interest demonstrates the urgent need to proceed with conservation quickly to balance these development pressures.

What's at stake?

These waters shelter a large diversity of habitats and species, including commercially important species such as lobster, along with a significant proportion of the cod population of the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. The area is home to the endangered leatherback turtle, as well as the at-risk Atlantic wolffish, and is an important summer foraging ground for the blue whale, the largest animal on earth.

History

Focused research and information gathering about this site began about a decade ago, but work was suspended in 2006. The project began to move again shortly after CPAWS Québec and other local groups asked the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to resume the process.

This project, as well as other proposed marine protected areas in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, is being proposed at the same time as oil and gas development is being hotly debated. The Québec government is currently conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment in the Québec portion of the Gulf to determine whether the area should be totally or partially opened to oil and gas activities. Once this assessment is made public (it is expected to be released in Spring 2013), the current moratorium on oil and gas development in the Québec portion of the Gulf could be fully or partially lifted. CPAWS Québec has requested that the Gaspésie (American Bank) Area of Interest be identified as "sensitive" in this environmental assessment and that the area be kept free of oil and gas activities.

What's next?

It is important that the governments of Canada and Québec reaffirm their interest in this project and formally appoint the public advisory committee to help develop the specific boundary and management arrangements, and finalize regulations to protect the area.



Blue whale | Mike Baird

LES ÎLES DE LA MADELEINE

Québec

Goal: Establish a marine protected area around Les Îles de la Madeleine to protect the health of this rich and diverse ecosystem, which includes species that are rarely found this far north.

December 2012 Goal: Progress made to formalize a marine protected area.

Status: Reasonable progress has been made. In December 2011, following years of delay and setbacks, Québec and Canada signed an agreement to conduct a study for a marine protected area in the region.

Size of potential protected area: Study area is about 16,500 km²

Concerns

There is still a long road ahead before a marine protected area can be established. This project is positive and encouraging, especially because it includes Canada, Québec and the community of Les Îles de la Madeleine. Given the intense development pressures that are building in the region, it is important to work in collaboration with the community, which largely supports the implementation of an MPA (more than 80% of respondents to a recent survey).

The study area is situated near the Old Harry oil and gas prospect, where exploratory drilling in Newfoundland waters is being proposed for as early as 2014. This proposed drilling project, along with broader offshore oil and gas development pressures, could overtake the marine protected area establishment process.

The Québec government is currently conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment in the Québec portion of the Gulf to determine whether the area should be totally or partially opened to oil and gas activities. Once this assessment is completed (final report is expected before April 2013), the current moratorium on oil and gas development in the Québec portion of the Gulf could

Rating

Progress: Some

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

be fully or partially lifted. CPAWS Québec has requested that the Îles de la Madeleine study area be identified as “sensitive” in this environmental assessment and kept free of oil and gas activities.

Given that jurisdiction over the Gulf of St. Lawrence is shared among five provinces, it is important that oil and gas development be addressed in a coordinated way. CPAWS has recommended a moratorium on oil and gas development in the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence to allow time for the provinces who share jurisdiction over the Gulf (QC, NB, NS, PEI and NL) to collectively decide whether oil and gas development should proceed, and to enable comprehensive conservation and management measures to be put in place.

What's at stake?

Les Îles de la Madeleine are located in a semi-enclosed shallow basin, with the warmest water of any marine region in Canada. As a result, the area is home to many species not found in other north-eastern ocean waters. The islands offer a stunning diversity of coastal ecosystems. Over 200 bird species frequent Les Îles de la Madeleine, including important nesting populations of roseate tern and endangered piping plovers, and a large portion of the North American population of northern gannets, numbering more than 25,000 pairs. Many fish and shellfish species are found in abundance in the area, including snow crab, lobsters,

Roseate tern | Kirk Rogers



ÎLES DE LA MADELEINE

Québec

continued...

sea scallops, Atlantic cod, Canadian plaice, flounder and sand lance. Harp and hooded seals whelp on the offshore ice in early spring, and harbour seals are common residents. Whales are sometimes seen in the area, as they migrate to their feeding or birthing grounds.

History

The area along the Madeleine banks is one of 29 Canadian marine regions recognized by Parks Canada, which has been working to establish a National Marine Conservation Area in this exceptional natural and human environment for many years. However progress was long impeded by jurisdictional questions and the lack of a shared Québec-Canada framework within which to jointly advance the proposal.

The December 2011 signing of the Agreement Regarding a Planned Study Concerning a Marine Protected Area in Îles de la Madeleine is an important step forward for the marine protected area, and is part of the St. Lawrence Action Plan 2011-16 under which the federal and Québec governments have committed to work together to protect and enhance management of the St. Lawrence River.

Over two years (2012-13), this study will examine the ecological, cultural and socioeconomic features of the area, identify conservation issues and interests, and examine potential opportunities and challenges to establish a marine protected area. A key component of the study is to identify the interests and concerns of local residents and aboriginal communities.¹²

The creation of an advisory committee in May 2012 represents an opportunity for information sharing between the federal and provincial government agencies and the community. More information is needed by the community about the long-term benefits of marine protected areas, particularly for communities dependent on marine resources.

This project, as well as other proposed marine protected areas in the Gulf of St Lawrence, is being proposed at the same time as oil and gas development is being hotly debated. The Quebec government is currently conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment in the Quebec portion of the Gulf to determine whether the area should be totally or partially opened to oil and gas activities. Once this assessment is completed (expected before April 2013), the current moratorium on oil and gas development in the Quebec portion of the Gulf could be fully or partially lifted. CPAWS Quebec has requested that the Îles de la Madeleine study area of interest be identified as “sensitive” in this environmental assessment and that the area be kept free of oil and gas activities.

What's next?

Complete Les Îles de la Madeleine evaluation study by 2013, and then develop a formal agreement to proceed with the marine protected area. Identification of the marine protected area boundary should be done before any oil and gas licences are issued in the area.



Les Îles de la Madeleine | Sabine Jessen

¹²http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/communiqués_en/2011/c20111205-ilesdelamadeleine.htm

BAY OF FUNDY

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick

Rating

Progress: None

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

Goal: Large National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) in the outer Bay of Fundy -- from Digby Neck & Islands/ St. Mary's Bay, NS to Grand Manan Island/Passamaquoddy Bay, NB.

December 2012 Goal: Announcement by Parks Canada in collaboration with the NS and NB governments of their intention to proceed with a feasibility study for an NMCA in the outer Bay of Fundy.

Status: No tangible progress has been made over the past year to establish a marine protected area of any kind in the Bay of Fundy, despite the ecological significance of the Bay and strong public support for conservation measures.

Size of potential protected area: CPAWS' recommendation is for an NMCA of 10,000-15,000 km²

Concerns

Significant cutbacks to Parks Canada this year, including a reduction in operational and scientific capacity, mean that Parks Canada does not have the much-needed marine conservation expertise in the Atlantic region to support new marine protected areas.

The outer Bay of Fundy remains open to industrial activities. Threats include dragging, aquaculture, shipping, coastal mega-quarries, tidal turbines, and potential for mining marine sediments. Whale entanglements in fishing gear are also a big concern.

What's at stake?

Endangered North Atlantic right whales, humpbacks and fin whales are all drawn to the Bay for its rich upwelling zones, as are millions of shorebirds that flock to the salt marshes and mudflats each year on their annual migrations. Cold water corals live deep in the outer Bay, and provide protection from currents and predators for over 1,300 species of fish and invertebrates. Along with the world's highest tides and spectacular coastlines, these make the Bay of Fundy one of Canada's most famous natural places. However, the Bay is becoming increasingly industrialized, with proposals for tidal turbines and coastal mega-quarries, all before key conservation zones have been identified and protected.

Conservation must come before industrialization, or the most important places for marine life in the Bay of Fundy will remain in jeopardy.

History

CPAWS has been working to support the creation of an NMCA in the outer Bay of Fundy for many years, with a focus on engaging with local community members and fishers, and raising public support for marine conservation in the Bay.

The Bay of Fundy is one of Canada's 29 distinct marine regions for which Parks Canada has a mandate to establish NMCAs. The Parks Canada scientific study of potential NMCA sites in the Bay, completed in 2012, used leading principles



Humpback whale | Susan Guerrero

BAY OF FUNDY

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick

continued...

in network design to identify priority areas, but until the report is released publicly it is not clear which sites are being recommended. We anticipate that the report will identify priority areas in the outer Bay of Fundy of high ecological importance.

With the Bay of Fundy as the only Canadian entry in last year's final round of the Seven Natural Wonders contest, the public profile for the Bay has been raised dramatically since May 2011. There is tremendous support for protecting the Bay, but still very little progress in advancing a marine protected area.

What's Next?

We are recommending that Parks Canada and the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia governments initiate active discussions about an NMCA; publicly release the scientific assessment of potential National Marine Conservation Areas; and initiate a feasibility study for an NMCA in the Bay of Fundy. DFO also needs to take a leadership role in protecting the Bay of Fundy, including initiating a regional marine protected area network planning process for the Bay.



Fundy National Park | Jeremy Cassie

ST. ANNS BANK

Nova Scotia

Rating

Progress: Significant

Conservation

Measures: Mixed

Goal: An Oceans Act Marine Protected Area on St Anns Bank off the east coast of Cape Breton.

December 2012 Goal: MPA established

Status: Significant progress has been made toward the official protection of St. Anns Bank as a marine protected area. Over the past year, extensive discussions have taken place about the boundary for the proposed MPA and possible zoning, with DFO expected to recommend a final configuration early in 2013.

Size of potential protected area: 4,600 km²

Concerns

CPAWS is concerned that the final boundary configuration will be modified to exclude areas along the continental slope as well as areas of known importance for cod populations due to concerns of offshore fishing interests. It is also likely that the final boundary will be adjusted to exclude areas of potential oil and gas interest.

What's at stake?

St Anns Bank shelters a wide range of species within the Eastern Scotian Shelf region. It offers a variety of marine habitat types, including shallow waters of the Bank and deeper waters of the Laurentian Channel, sheltering species-at-risk populations including Atlantic wolffish and deep-sea corals and sponges. St Anns Bank is an important

summer foraging area for the endangered leatherback turtle, and a migration corridor for many fishes and marine mammals.

History

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has led several rounds of public consultations and conducted scientific studies to determine the critical parts of the Eastern Shelf marine environment that should be protected. In October 2009, the government proposed protection for three areas off the coast of Nova Scotia, including St. Anns Bank. This led to an extensive public and stakeholder review, which resulted in the announcement of St. Anns Bank as the Area of Interest (AOI) in June 2011. CPAWS has been participating on the Stakeholders Advisory Committee for St. Anns Bank, which also includes representation from the fishing and oil and gas industries, as well as the provincial government.

What's next?

A final proposed protected area boundary will likely be determined by DFO in early 2013, which will result in "intention regulations" being developed for consideration by the Minister. If approved, DFO will conduct a public consultation, followed by final designation of the MPA.

Coral | NOAA



LAURENTIAN CHANNEL

Newfoundland

Rating

Progress: Some

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

Goal: An Oceans Act Marine Protected Area (MPA) that conserves species diversity and healthy ecosystems.

December 2012 Goal: MPA established

Status: Laurentian Channel was formally identified as an Area of Interest (AOI) for an Oceans Act MPA in June 2010. Since the fall of 2010, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has been convening a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, which includes CPAWS, and is tasked with advising the government on conservation objectives, boundary and management measures for the proposed MPA. The establishment process has been delayed and is now expected to continue through 2013.

Size of potential protected area: Area of interest is 17,950 km²

Concerns

DFO has indicated that the final size of the MPA may be smaller than the current study area. CPAWS is concerned that significant changes to the boundary that would remove some of the most ecologically significant portions of the proposed MPA, which include important cod and redfish populations. Cod is not being considered as a priority species for the development of conservation objectives, in spite of its ecological importance.

What's at stake?

The Laurentian Channel is a deep submarine valley over 1200 km long and covering an area of almost 36,000 km², that extends from the intersection of the St. Lawrence and Saguenay Rivers to the edge of the continental shelf off Newfoundland. The Channel supports the largest concentration of black dogfish in Canada, and is the only

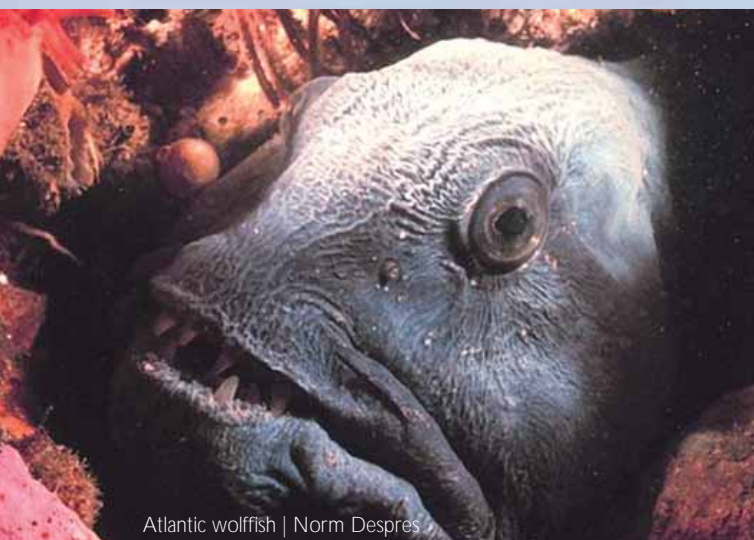
location where pupping occurs. It is also home to deep water corals; is the only known wintering area for cod and some entire groundfish populations; a spawning ground for many different fish species; a critical migration route for marine mammals moving in and out of the Gulf of St. Lawrence; and a breeding area for many seabirds. Many at risk species can also be found in the area, including harbour porpoise, blue whale, Atlantic cod and northern and Atlantic wolffish.

History

The Laurentian Channel was first identified as an ecologically and biologically significant area by DFO scientists in 2007. Following further assessments and a priority-setting exercise, DFO announced a 17,950 km² Area of Interest off the southwest coast of Newfoundland for potential designation as an Oceans Act MPA on 8 June 2010.

What's next?

Finalize a boundary proposal and management measures for the proposed MPA with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, and initiate the regulatory process to complete designation of the MPA under the Oceans Act.



Atlantic wolffish | Norm Despres

SOUTH COAST FJORDS Newfoundland

Rating

Progress: None

Conservation

Measures: Uncertain

Goal: A National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) on the southwest coast of Newfoundland.

December 2012 Goal: Parks Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announce a feasibility study for an NMCA.

Status: A joint federal/provincial announcement to begin a feasibility study for the NMCA has not been made despite ongoing local support for the site.

Size of potential protected area: Yet to be determined

Concerns

The process to launch a federal-provincial feasibility study has been stalled for many years, awaiting formal endorsement of the federal and provincial governments. Meanwhile the spectacular fjord region remains vulnerable to oil and gas exploration and overfishing, and the historic outpost culture continues to decline as the historic fishing industry remains moribund. Local communities have expressed interest in establishing an NMCA as it could provide an economic boost to the area by diversifying the economy through increased ecotourism.

What's at stake?

Located between Port-aux-Basques and the Burin Peninsula, the southwest fjords of Newfoundland offer a stunning coastal landscape from low sandy beaches in the west to immense granite cliffs and deep fjords in the east. Ice-free year round, these fjords are a haven for blue, humpback, fin and killer whales in the winter and habitat for endangered leatherback turtles in the summer. It is also an area of Newfoundland where local outpost

communities are struggling to survive in the aftermath of the fisheries collapse.

History

In 2003 the town of Burgeo, with the support of five other local communities, submitted a report to Parks Canada outlining their interest in an NMCA on the southwest coast of Newfoundland. They noted in their report that:

The relative isolation and remoteness of much of the land-sea interface in this area plus the vast ecosystem of which it is a part, offers a distinct Canadian perspective for conservation and ecological sustainability. Coupled with the natural attributes are the cultural and historical aspects of people who once inhabited the area plus the historical and present way of life of inhabitants who chose to remain.¹³

Despite many meetings by representatives of the local communities and CPAWS with both provincial and federal officials, the two levels of government have still not made a decision to proceed with an NMCA.

What's next?

The federal and provincial governments need to announce their intention to proceed with a feasibility study for this proposed NMCA.

¹³The Burgeo Diversification Development Board. 2003. Potential National Marine Conservation Area, South Coast of Newfoundland, Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Submitted to Parks Canada. Prepared by Snow Consulting.



Leatherback turtle | Peter Stacey

Key Terms

What are marine protected areas?

Canada has adopted the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition of a protected area as:

A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Marine protected areas are recognized world-wide as an essential tool to protect ocean biodiversity, and there is growing evidence that they can contribute to the long term sustainability of fisheries and coastal communities. Marine protected areas can also support economic diversification through the development of tourism and recreational opportunities.

The strictness of protection in marine protected areas (often known as MPAs) can vary considerably from one MPA to another, and even among zones within an individual MPA. Zones in which all extractive activities are strictly prohibited are referred to as “no-take” reserves or zones. Scientists have recommended that at least 30% of each bioregion should be within no-take reserves, if they are going to meaningfully contribute to the conservation of marine biodiversity.

Why marine protected areas?

The value of marine protected areas as a tool to protect ocean ecosystems is now recognized around the world. There is strong scientific evidence that well designed and managed marine protected areas help to sustain marine life, and sustainable fisheries.

However, to achieve the full environmental and socio-economic benefits, marine protected areas need to be well designed and managed as regional and national networks, and have big enough areas off-limits to commercial fishing, so that marine life can recover and “spill over” into adjacent ocean areas. In 2011 CPAWS published science-based guidelines for marine protected area networks, which include a recommendation that at least 30% of each marine bioregion be strictly protected, with fishing and other industrial uses prohibited.¹⁴

Canada's Federal Marine Protected Areas:

The federal government has three laws that it can use to create marine protected areas: the National Marine Conservation Areas Act [Parks Canada National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCA's)]; the Canada Wildlife Act [Environment Canada marine National Wildlife Areas (mNWA's)] and the Oceans Act [Fisheries and Oceans Canada Marine Protected Areas (Oceans Act MPAs)].

¹⁴Jessen, S. et al (2011)

Tufted puffins | Sabine Jessen

ABOUT CPAWS

CPAWS is Canada's voice for wilderness. Since 1963 we've led in creating over two-thirds of Canada's protected areas. That amounts to about half a million square kilometres – an area bigger than the entire Yukon Territory! Our vision is that Canada will protect at least half of our public land and water. As a national charity with 13 chapters, 50,000 supporters and hundreds of volunteers, CPAWS works collaboratively with governments, local communities, industry and indigenous peoples to protect our country's amazing natural places. We are also on guard to ensure that our parks are managed to protect the nature within them.

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